

THREE FOOTS

By Nancy Van Laan

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WAY UP yonder on the tippy top of a tall mountain, there once lived three squirrels. The young'un's name was Foot. His ma was called Foot-Foot. And, a course, his pa had to be called Foot-Foot-Foot 'cause he was the biggest.

Now these squirrels weren't right smart in the head. If they'd had a lick of sense, they would've never settled down to live on a bald-faced mountain where nothin' much grows that's good to eat. But sure enough they did, and it wasn't long before Foot, Foot-Foot, and Foot-Foot-Foot got to feelin' mighty hungry.

Right then, Foot told Foot-Foot, "I'm so hungry, I could eat rocks."

Foot-Foot told Foot-Foot-Foot, "Foot-Foot-Foot, your son is so hungry, he's a-gonna eat this whole entire mountain right up."

After thinkin' and thinkin' and thinkin' a good long while,

Foot-Foot-Foot said, "Foot-Foot, you and Foot foller me."

Off they'uns went, round and round and all the way down the side of the mountain. 'Course it took forever, which made Foot, Foot-Foot, and Foot-Foot-Foot hungrier than a bunch of halfstarved hogs.

Right there at the bottom of the holler was the tangliest ol' giant of a nut tree a-standin' there just so. It held out its arms like it was fixin' to throw out a welcome mat.

Seein' this, Foot, Foot-Foot, and Foot-Foot-Foot could barely contain themselves. Why, with their tails a-twitchin' and their tongues a-danglin', they pretty near had an out-and-out fit of pure anticipation.

"I'm a-gonna start at the bottom and eat all the way up to the top," said Foot.

"I'm a-gonna start at the top and eat all the way down to the bottom," said Foot-Foot-Foot.

"Well, I guess I'll just start in the middle and eat a little ways up and a little ways down and a little ways all around," said Foot-Foot.

And so, they commenced to eat.

Foot at the bottom. *Chew! Chew! Chew!*

Foot-Foot in the middle. *Chaw! Chaw! Chaw!*

And Foot-Foot-Foot at the top. *Chomp! Chomp! Chomp!*

After a while, Foot complained to Foot-Foot. "Foot-Foot, please tell Foot-Foot-Foot my innards hurt."

So Foot-Foot told Foot-Foot-Foot that Foot did not feel so good.

It took time to sink in, but fine-ly, after thinkin' and thinkin' and thinkin' some more, Foot-Foot-Foot told Foot-Foot that Foot had eaten too fast. So Foot-Foot-Foot told Foot-Foot to tell Foot to slow down.

But it was too late. Foot never got Foot-Foot-Foot's message from Foot-Foot because Foot passed out.

Meanwhile, Foot-Foot and Foot-Foot-Foot commenced to eat some more.

After a spell, Foot-Foot didn't feel so well. So Foot-Foot told Foot-Foot-Foot that she was sick, too.

This worried Foot-Foot-Foot. Foot-Foot-Foot got to thinkin' and thinkin' and thinkin' this over for the longest time.

Fine-ly, Foot-Foot-Foot said to Foot-Foot, "Maybe you ate too fast, Foot-Foot. Slow down."

But by the time Foot-Foot-Foot's message got to Foot-Foot, Foot-Foot was lyin' next to Foot—*out cold!*

Just like before, Foot-Foot-Foot ate some more. Pretty soon, Foot-Foot-Foot didn't feel so good either.

So Foot-Foot-Foot called to Foot-Foot and Foot. "Foot-Foot! Foot! Your ol' pa Foot-Foot-Foot's sick, too!"

'Course, Foot-Foot and Foot couldn't hear Foot-Foot-Foot 'cause they were still out cold.

Law, right then and there came the mightiest crash and—BLAM!—down fell Foot-Foot-Foot. Now there they all were—Foot, Foot-Foot, Foot-Foot-Foot *at the foot of the tree!*

That's where they laid—*and that's where they stayed.*

So the moral of this story is. . . always make sure one foot knows what the other foot is doin'!